



# ADOT impact statement delayed until '08

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The proposed South Mountain Freeway's timetable has slipped again, potentially giving state transportation planners more time to negotiate a route away from homes in the Ahwatukee Foothills.

The long-awaited draft environmental impact statement originally was expected last fall. Then the Arizona Department of Transportation said the draft would be out by January. In December, ADOT said the draft report of air, noise, wildlife and other impacts wouldn't be released until late summer of this year. ADOT now says the draft won't be ready until early 2008.

"The work on any environmental impact study is very detailed and the process is often subject to time extensions," ADOT spokesman Doug Nintzel said in explaining the slipping timetable. "It comes down to a lot of detailed work to review what we have studied so far."

Nintzel said the report for the 10-lane, 22-mile freeway is one of the most complicated ADOT has ever undertaken.

"This is probably the most detailed environmental process the agency has worked through since the study for the I-10 Deck Park Tunnel. It just takes time to take care of all the required details."

A freeway opponent said the delays are good for the opposition.

"I personally think it gives the governor and other state officials potential time to negotiate with the GRIC (Gila River Indian Community)," said Jim Jochim, a member of the grass-roots opposition group Protecting Arizona's Children's and Resources.

"And as for PARC, it gives us more time to raise funds for our little war chest and to line up experts. I think time works to the advantage of people opposed to building it on Pecos Road.

"I also think (PARC attorney) Howard Shanker has played a role in this. They (ADOT) know that PARC isn't out here asleep, so to speak. It's given them a wake-up call because once they release the draft EIS, it becomes a fairly mechanical process, a 45-day comment period, the final EIS, then the ROD (record of decision) and it's done."

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